

MINUTES

Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau Board of Directors Meeting January 15, 2014

The Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau met at
Durham Technical Community College, Orange County Campus, Hillsborough

Board Members Present: Lee Pavao, Penny Rich, Lydia Lavelle, Lee Storrow, Gordon Jameson, Annette Stone, Greg Overbeck, Mark Sherburne, Karen DeHart, Jim Parker, Anthony Carey.

Not Present: Laura Morgan, Meg McGurk, and Dave Gephart.

Staff attendance: Laurie Paolicelli, Linda Ekeland, and Tina Fuller.

Also attending: Sarah DeGennaro, Executive Director - Alliance for Historic Hillsborough; Stephanie Perri and Tom Hickey with Clean Design, agency of record.

Welcome

Board Chairman Anthony Carey welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 8:28 am. Mr. Carey acknowledged and welcomed Lee Storrow, Chapel Hill Town Councilman, to the board. Mr. Storrow replaces Gene Pease who did not seek reelection to the Town of Chapel Hill's council. Mr. Carey also noted that Alderman Michelle Johnson, Town of Carrboro would be joining us at our next meeting.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Carey requested a motion to approve the November 20, 2013 minutes. Jim Parker motioned to approve, Lee Pavao seconded. With all members in favor, the minutes were approved as submitted.

Round-Robin updates

Restaurants – Greg Overbeck reported that Chapel Hill Restaurant Group's newest venture, Page Road Grill, is doing very well. It was also mentioned that CHRG is on the Hampton Inn & Suites Carrboro preferred catering list.

NCHSAA – Karen DeHart reported that the H.S. championships are over. She also mentioned that they finished their 100-year anniversary event where 750 people attended. The March BB conference will be at the Sheraton. Working to bring softball to Chapel Hill – would like to hold at a facility with a collegiate atmosphere.

Carrboro – Annette Stone reported that their new brand Carrboro 'Feel Free' would soon be more visible throughout town. She also reported that Cameron's, Hickory Tavern and WomanCraft Gifts have moved into space adjoining the hotel with two more restaurants forthcoming. Construction on old Seagrove lot will house corporate office and retail for Fleet Feet which brings many visitors to the town.

Lydia Lavelle also mentioned that the newly formed TDA presented their budget to the Alderman at the previous night's meeting and it was approved. Budget reflects occupancy tax for Carrboro hotels to be used for wayfinding, signage and town promotions.

Orange County –\$750,000 was received through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program to help with infrastructure for future development by the Morinaga Company.

Other News – Laurie Paolicelli updated board on recent meeting with Fundraiser hired for Kidzu and Friday Center. She reported that the new theater at university mall would take over space that Kidzu was going to use temporarily until their final move, so now they will temporarily be in the space that Arc of Orange uses during their seasonal tree gala. She also reported the Friday Center is producing more programming, more series and building a new atrium.

Chapel Hill – Lee Storrow informed that Monday was the first town council meeting with the two new council members. The Obey Creek proposal was a matter of discussion and Storrow pointed out that there is a lot of concern from the residents in the southern part of town; largely traffic issues. Storrow reported that traffic and economic studies would need to be commenced and reviewed before moving forward. Greg Overbeck noted that the original plan rendered a footprint the size of South Point and University Mall combined.

Hotels – Mark Sherburne stated that transient business continues to be phenomenal for the market as a whole. Anthony Carey reported that Executive Chef Adam Rose has left Il Palio to pursue his new restaurant, Straw Valley in Durham. New up and coming chef, Teddy Davis from Martha's Vineyard arrived last week; Davis' passion is Italian cooking. Il Palio will undergo renovations in July, down about 6 weeks to outside public but available to staying guests.

Arts – Gordon Jameson told the board that Frank Gallery also ended well for 2013. A Gala marking their 4th year anniversary is coming up April 12th. Jameson reported they might adopt Deep Dish's silent auction tactics where participants will have the opportunity to underwrite sets and exhibitions and still eligible for tax deduction.

Hillsborough –Jim Parker reported that Hillsborough Depot has closed. The Pet store next door is expanding into that space. Hillsborough Chamber would no longer host Hog Day, noting that the Chamber would focus more on membership and promoting their local businesses. Parker reported that Waterstone is going into their next phase connecting out to Old Hwy 86 which will see about 150 new homes. Forest Ridge off Hwy 70 will see 250 more homes, The Gulf Rim changing to LaPlace Louisiana Cookery in February. Hillsborough is moving to north Hillsborough in the old Maxway space. Riverwalk bridges should be in by the end of the month and opening in summer.

Reports

Budget/Finance – Penny Rich reported that December was on target, the additional \$13,000 plus was received from Town of Chapel hill, and will be applied towards promotions, otherwise uneventful. Commissioner Rich moved on to her update on the Ad hoc committee meeting. Rich reported that she, Lee Pavao, Laurie Paolicelli and Anthony Carey met to on December 19, to discuss approaching the commissioners on administration fees and rent expenditures charged to the Visitors Bureau which amounts to about \$100,000. Rich mentioned that no other Orange County department pays this amount to exist. Commissioner Rich went on to say the committee wants to address two issues; 1) reduce that amount; Rich was advised by Commissioner Jacobs to have a formal written letter to Commissioners, this group will probably meet one more time to draft that letter and 2) a new sales position.

Rich explained that the conversation with the Commissioners should provide evidence for the need of another sales person to capitalize on the amount of inventory in the pipeline and how the position would pay for itself.

Marketing update

An update on advertising was presented by the Bureau's agency, Clean Design, and highlights included: media delivered. Creative focusing less on "edge of triangle" and more on destination, towns and key personalities in town. Running ads in business publications and consumer publication on the Atlantic Coast; as well as key travel sites nationally such as Triple AAA. Responses are encouraging.

Anthony Carey inquired if there were ways to follow the behaviors of the trackable clicks, in which Hickey replied there were. Carey commented that it would be interesting to see where the clicks derived from that lead to the hotels. Laurie Paolicelli commented that web analytics would be on the agenda next month.

Lee Storrow commented on the joint initiative ad between the Town and the Visitors Bureau to showcase the sculpture at 140 West in the national art magazine Public Art Review. Storrow inquired if there were other opportunities the Visitor Bureau could collaborate with local groups. Paolicelli suggested the growing LGBT travel industry was one opportunity that the board should explore with local groups.

Executive Director Report

Ms. Paolicelli requested the board partake in a SWOT survey where they could provide input on the types of programs the Visitor Bureau should look into, she noted that the analysis would be applied to the 2014-15 Plan of Action.

Sales

Linda Ekeland reported 15 leads and 11 bookings in the last 2 months and 5 leads and 3 bookings so far this month consisting of group types. Ekeland informed the board that she is currently working with Mayor Kleinschmidt and Roger Stancil on an August meeting of the Mayors Innovation Project. She reported that a new Meeting and Event guide is in the works.

Other Business

With no other business to discuss, Chairman Carey adjourned the meeting at 9:29 AM.

Minutes reviewed by:
Laurie Paolicelli, Executive Director

Date

Minutes accepted by:
Anthony Carey, Chairman

Date